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United Nations (U.N.) Security Council meeting, at the U.N.'s headquarters in New York, in the U.S.

U.N. RESOLUTION ON SYRIA BLOCKED

On February 4, the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council voted on a new resolution, or formal proposal. The resolution was to warn Syria that its army must stop using tanks and other weapons against its own people. It also urged the country's president, Bashar al-Assad, to step down.

To the surprise of many people, Russia and China both voted against the proposal. As these two countries had vetoed, or blocked, the resolution, it could not be sent to the Syrian government.

Of the Security Council's 15 member countries, five are permanent members. These are the U.S., Russia, Britain, China, and France. The other ten members change. Each country remains a member for two years before being replaced by another country. The permanent members have the power to veto resolutions with which they don't agree.

The resolution was proposed because the violence in Syria has been getting worse. Since it began about 11 months ago the U.N. estimates that at least 5,500 people have been killed in the country. Much of the recent fighting is around Homs, Syria's third-largest city, which has a population of about 1.5 million.

Mr. al-Assad, the Syrian president, has run the country for 12 years. He took over from his father, Hafez al-Assad, after he died in 2000. Mr. al-Assad's father had ruled Syria since 1971. The al-Assad family has therefore controlled the country for 40 years. Other members of the president's family also hold important senior positions. The president's younger brother, for example, is a senior army commander.

At the beginning of last year, some Syrians began to protest. They said that they were demonstrating against Mr.

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al-Assad. The protesters accused him and his family of being dishonest and corrupt and demanded to be able to elect their own leaders. They are also angry with the police who they say have too many powers.

The protests were similar to those in other countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya, which started at around the same time. Soon after they began, these demonstrations became known as the “Arab Spring”. In the last 12 months, Arab Spring protests have forced the leaders of Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen to step down. The Libyan leader was killed. Each of these countries has now either elected new leaders or is planning to do so. However, this has not happened in Syria.



Even though the protests have grown in Syria Mr. al-Assad insists that it is criminal gangs and terrorists that are causing the problem and not ordinary people. Many Syrians still support Mr. al-Assad. They too believe that the demonstrators are to blame for the violence.

When the protests first started the Syrian army was ordered to stop them. Yet it has been unsuccessful. Over the last six months street demonstrations have been held in an increasing number of towns and cities, including Damascus, the capital.

Recently, more and more soldiers have changed sides and joined the protesters. They have formed an organization called the Free Syrian

Army (FSA). Some protesters have managed to get guns and weapons. However, the army's tanks and rockets are much more powerful.

Syria is a member of the Arab League. This organization has 22 member countries. Last year the other Arab League member countries voted to suspend Syria because of what its army was doing.

Eventually, Mr. al-Assad agreed to allow observers from Arab League countries to go to Syria to check on what was happening. Yet this did not stop the army attacks on the protesters. The League then ordered its observers to leave.

The Arab League has been asking the U.N. to help civilians in Syria. It says that many ordinary people are in danger because of the fighting.

The Arab League has come up with a plan to end the violence. It says that Mr. al-Assad should stand down, all the fighting should stop, and free and fair elections held. The U.N. agrees with this plan but Mr. al-Assad has refused to accept it.

The leaders of many countries were angry at Russia and China for voting against the U.N. Security Council resolution. Countries such as the U.S., France, Britain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia accused them both of deliberately prolonging the fighting in Syria.

Yet Russia argued the wording of the U.N. resolution was wrong. It said that the resolution put all the blame on Mr. al-Assad and his government. The U.N.'s proposal, Russia explained, should have said that the armed protesters are also part of the problem, and they too must stop fighting.

However, some people were not surprised at the outcome of the vote. Russia and China often say that it is wrong to interfere with what's happening in other countries. Last

year they were unhappy about what took place in Libya. The Security Council gave permission for NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member countries to use warplanes to protect civilians in Libya. Yet eventually, this military assistance helped the Libyan demonstrators to overthrow their leaders.

Russia has supported Syria for many years. Some of its warships still use the Syrian port of Tartus as a naval base. Syria buys all its weapons, including tanks and rockets, from Russia. Many suspect that this is why Russia does not want other countries to force Mr. al-Assad to go.

On February 7, Sergei Lavrov, a senior Russian minister, met Mr. al-Assad in Damascus. He said that he had talked with the Syrian president about ways to bring the fighting to an end. Yet while these discussions were taking place, the fighting around the city of Homs was getting worse. Some reports said that tanks were being used and that rockets were fired into the center of the city.

Some people believe that Russia will now try to work out a new plan to stop the fighting in Syria. Yet others say that unless Mr. al-Assad agrees to resign the violence is unlikely to stop. ■

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

Permanent member countries:

China France Russia
U.S.A. Britain

Current non-permanent member countries:

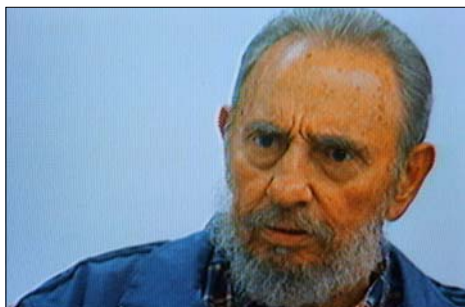
Azerbaijan	Morocco
Colombia	Pakistan
Germany	Portugal
Guatemala	South Africa
India	Togo

REVOLUTIONARY MEMOIRS

On February 4, Fidel Castro spoke to a crowd of people in Havana, the capital of Cuba, about his new book, *Time's Guerrilla*. Mr. Castro, who is now 85 years old, is the former leader of Cuba. Today, he rarely appears in public.

Mr. Castro is one of the world's most famous **revolutionaries**. As a young man he studied law at university in Havana. He planned to stand in an election that was due to be held in 1952. However, just before the election a senior army officer, General Batista, seized control of the country. The next year Mr. Castro tried to start an uprising against the General. Yet it was unsuccessful. Mr. Castro was caught and sent to prison.

After he was released, Mr. Castro left Cuba and went to live in Mexico. There he met a number of other Cubans and decided to start a revolution in Cuba. In 1956, he and a few others secretly traveled back to their homeland.



Fidel Castro

General Batista, who was supported by the U.S., was unpopular. A lot of Cubans began to join Mr. Castro. After two years of fighting, Mr. Castro's revolutionary army marched into Havana. General Batista fled and eventually went to live in Portugal.

As soon as he was in control, Mr. Castro announced that Cuba would be run under communist rules.

NewsCAST

SPACE FLAVOURED DRINK — A man in Chile has just made an unusual type of wine. The wine maker put a meteorite, a small rock that had fallen from space, into a wooden barrel of wine he had made. The liquid was left for a year before being mixed with some other wine. It was then put into bottles ready for drinking. A friend who collects meteorites lent one to the wine maker to use. The meteorite is thought to have landed in Chile roughly 6,000 years ago and to be about 4.5 million years old. The wine maker sells his "space wine", called Meteorito, to his friends for about \$11 a bottle.

Although General Batista had been unpopular, not all Cubans were happy Mr. Castro and his revolutionary army had taken over. Thousands of people left the country. Most went to live in Florida, a part of the U.S. Florida is less than 100 miles (160 kilometers) across the sea from Cuba.

Mr. Castro ran Cuba for 49 years and became one of the world's longest-serving leaders. In 2008, he announced that he would hand control of the country over to his younger brother Raúl.

Cuba is now one of the last communist countries in the world. It has very good schools and hospitals but most Cubans are very poor. Since Raúl Castro has been in charge he has made several important changes. One was to allow people to set up their own companies and employ other workers. Yet Cubans may still not leave the country without first getting special permission to do so.

Mr. Castro is thought to be in poor health. He wrote his book with the

help of a local journalist. It is about Mr. Castro's life up until 1958, when he led the communist revolution in Cuba.

When Mr. Castro ran Cuba he often made very long speeches that went on for several hours. Some people say that his memoirs are similar. His new book has two volumes and is 1,000 pages long. ■

CHIMPS AND BONOBOS

Chimpanzees, or chimps, and bonobos are two types of African ape. They look quite similar and are closely related. Yet scientists have often wondered why their behavior is so different. Now two American anthropologists, scientists who study human behavior, believe that they know the reason.



Bonobo

Chimps can be very aggressive. They fight and sometimes even kill other chimpanzees. Yet bonobos are gentle with each other, do not fight, and spend a lot of time playing.

In the past, humans have tamed or domesticated certain wild animals. Dogs and horses are examples. Dogs are all descended from wolves. Yet pet dogs are very different from, and much less aggressive than, the wolves that live in the wild.

The scientists believe that something similar happened to bonobos. Over time they became "tame", while chimpanzees remained "wild".

Chimps and bonobos evolved from the same ancestor. This type of ape lived in Africa between one and a half and two million years ago. Around this time, the Congo River formed. It separated groups of the chimp and bonobo ancestors. One group lived north of the river and the other south of it, as chimps and bonobos do today. Apes cannot swim. So the two groups were permanently divided. The scientists claim that this is the main reason they evolved in different ways.

*Chimpanzee*

The scientists say that what happened next is similar to an experiment that took place in Russia in the 1950s. There, a scientist started to breed wild silver foxes. He selected only the less aggressive foxes and allowed them to breed and have young. Within 20 generations his foxes were not aggressive any more and were like pet dogs.

The tame and wild foxes also looked a bit different. The tame ones had floppy ears, smaller skulls and curlier tails. Bonobos, too, look slightly different from chimps. Their skulls are smaller and some of their teeth are shorter.

The scientists believe the apes that evolved into chimps had more competition than those living south of the river. For example, gorillas live north of the Congo River, and the chimps would have had to compete with them for food and territory. This means that the most aggressive

chimps would have been the most successful in getting enough food and competing for a mate.

South of the river there was little or no competition for food or territory (gorillas do not live in this part of Africa). The anthropologists think that female apes formed their own groups and could choose less aggressive males to mate with. Therefore, slowly, over hundreds of thousands of years, the southern apes evolved into bonobos, or tame versions of their chimpanzee relatives. ■

DEEP-SEA GIANTS

Scientists have discovered a new species of crustacean living in a deep-sea trench on the ocean floor near New Zealand. The pale-colored creatures are an unusual type of amphipod.

Amphipods are found all around the world in shallow and deep water. Different types live in fresh water and salt water. Nearly all of them are smaller than 1.2 inches (three centimeters) in length. So the scientists were surprised when they fished up “giant” amphipods, which were as long as 11 inches (28 centimeters).

*Giant amphipods*

Amphipods look a bit like prawns. They have curved, segmented bodies and several pairs of legs. They use some of the legs to feed with, while the others help the amphipod to swim. Their bodies are

“laterally compressed”. This means that they are quite narrow, imagine a woodlouse that has been squeezed in at the sides.

Amphipods are scavengers. They mostly eat bits of food floating in the water. In the deep ocean these sink down from fish or other creatures feeding closer to the sea’s surface. These bits of food are often called detritus, so amphipods are sometimes called detritivores.

The giant amphipods were discovered in the Kermadec Trench. This is one of the deepest ocean trenches in the world. At its deepest the bottom of the trench is roughly 33,000 feet (10,000 meters) below the sea’s surface. The giant amphipods were discovered at a depth of about 23,000 feet (7,000 meters).

The scientists dropped a metal trap, with a dead fish inside it, into the trench. It was attached to a long cable. The trap also had cameras fitted to it. The scientists were hoping to catch and record a very rare type of deep-sea snailfish. They were therefore amazed when their trap attracted seven giant amphipods, which had never been seen before. Several more were also filmed swimming close by. Some of these were even bigger than those caught in the trap.

The scientists say that there may be a number of reasons this type of amphipod has grown so large. It could, for example, be something to do with the type of food it is able to find or something unusual about the environment in which it lives.

The scientists did also manage to catch seven snailfish. Yet what surprised them was that when another trap was lowered into the ocean in the same place a week later, they did not film or catch any more of the giant amphipods. ■

WASHING MACHINE POLLUTION

by Sue Nelson

An international team of scientists has recently published some new research about microplastic. The team's study shows that washing some types of clothes is having an **adverse** effect on the world's oceans.

Microplastic is the name for very tiny pieces of plastic smaller than one millimeter in size. There is already microplastic in the ocean that has come from large pieces of plastic rubbish breaking up. Tiny pieces of plastic such as those used in some cleaning products are another source. The recent study shows for the first time that fibers from cleaning synthetic clothing in washing machines must also be added to the list.

The scientists took water samples from 18 coastlines around the world on every continent. These included places such as Britain, India, and Singapore. Samples were taken regularly for three years. Every single sample contained microplastic, including fibers of synthetic clothing. These fibers are likely to have been transported into the oceans in wastewater or sewage.

Our clothes can be made from a range of fabrics. Some come from natural fibers such as cotton, wool, and silk. Others are made from synthetic fibers, including polyester, acrylic, and nylon. These fibers are composed of polymers, which are large molecules made of repeating chains of individual smaller molecules. They are mainly produced from fossil hydrocarbons such as coal, fuel oil, and natural gas.

Microplastic particles are small enough for marine animals to eat by accident. Microplastic has been found in the stomachs and even cells of some marine invertebrates. These are animals without a backbone such as lugworms and barnacles. Sea birds, fish, turtles, and many other marine creatures can also mistake microplastic for food. It is not known how much harm this will do yet, but it is part of ongoing research at the University of Plymouth, in Britain.

The scientists washed some synthetic clothes in **domestic** washing machines and tested the

wastewater. The tests showed one item of synthetic clothing can produce as many as 1,900 tiny fibers every time it is washed. The study found different amounts of fibers in the water depending on the item as well. For instance, a fleece released more fibers than a blanket.

Of the 18 coastline samples, those taken from the places with the largest human populations contained the most microplastic. Some pieces were smaller than the width of a human hair.

Clothes made from synthetic materials are popular. Many people, for example, wear Spandex clothes to work out at the gym or to go swimming. Spandex is a synthetic rubber made from polyurethane. When it's cold, people often put on a fleece (polyethylene) to keep warm.

Plastic was invented over 100 years ago. It is a very useful material, because it is light and can be easily shaped. Today it is used for manufacturing many things, from food packaging to aircraft wings. Yet plastic takes a long time to fully degrade or break down, in some cases more than 100 years.

This means that when plastic items are thrown away they can cause environmental problems.

These problems have been known about for more than 50 years. In 2006 a department of the United Nations (U.N.) estimated that there were 46,000 pieces of plastic rubbish per square mile of ocean.

Engineers and chemists may be able to help clothes designers and washing machine makers work out how to reduce the number of fibers getting into wastewater. There could also be research into treating sewage to remove microplastic, although these measures will not solve the problem of marine litter.

Many scientists believe that microscopic pieces of plastic could cause environmental problems in the future. More research is needed, they say, to work out what effects these microscopic pieces of plastic could have, especially if they get into the food chain.



Beach littered with plastic rubbish

REAL REPLICA MONA LISA?

A well-known art museum in Spain has found a copy, or replica, of the *Mona Lisa*, one of the world's most famous paintings. What's exciting, say museum officials, is that art experts believe that the copy was probably painted at exactly the same time as the real one.

Leonardo da Vinci painted the *Mona Lisa* at some time between 1503 and 1506. The picture now hangs in the Louvre art gallery in Paris, the capital of France. The painting is thought to be of Lisa Gherardini. She was the wife of a wealthy silk merchant who lived in the city of Florence, in what is now Italy. The painting is famous for the lady's mysterious hint of a smile. Some people think that she is smiling, while others think that she is not.

The real 500 year old painting is now much darker than it was when Leonardo da Vinci painted it. This is



Mona Lisa



Prado Mona Lisa

because it was covered in varnish. Over time the varnish has cracked, and dulled the colors underneath. Art experts believe that the painting would be badly damaged if anyone were to try to restore it.

Over the years, other artists have painted many copies of the *Mona Lisa*. Recently, the Museo del Prado (Prado Museum) in Madrid, the capital of Spain, discovered a copy in one of its storerooms. This copy was thought to have been painted about 100 years after the original was. The painting had a completely black background.

The museum decided to clean and restore the copy and include it in a new exhibition. Experts were then surprised to discover the black paint covered a different background. What's more, the "new" background was exactly the same as the one in the real *Mona Lisa*. They now think that the background was covered in black about 100 years after the picture was painted, but they don't know why.

Today, art experts use infrared equipment to see what is underneath

the surface of old paintings. They used this on the copy after it had been cleaned and had all the black paint removed. The infrared showed sketch marks underneath. These too were very similar to those of the real *Mona Lisa*.

Leonardo da Vinci had a number of younger artists working for him. They are often described as his pupils. Art experts now believe that the "Prado *Mona Lisa*" was painted by one of his pupils, probably at the same time as Leonardo da Vinci was painting the real one.

The Prado *Mona Lisa* is important as parts of the painting can be seen that are no longer visible in the real one. For example, in the Prado one you can see the patterns on the woman's dress and parts of the chair on which she is sitting.

The Prado Museum says that it will now put its *Mona Lisa* on display. It says that it will lend the painting to the Louvre in Paris for a special exhibition in the future. Then the two paintings will be side by side for the first time in 500 years. ■

NewsCAST

MAN IN SPACE — Two Canadian teenagers sent a man into space at a cost much lower than a multi-million dollar space mission. They spent C\$400 (\$400) on equipment to send a Lego man attached to a weather balloon into the atmosphere. Also included were a Canadian flag, four cameras, and a cell phone. The phone had a GPS app so the teenagers could track where the Lego man came down. The cameras took pictures of him 15 miles (24 kilometers) above the Earth's surface. The flight lasted for about two hours. The balloon and the Lego man landed in a field around 75 miles (120 kilometers) away from the launch site.

MALDIVES PRESIDENT RESIGNS

On February 7, after several weeks of protests against him, Mohamed Nasheed, the president of the Maldives, announced that he had decided to resign.



Mohamed Nasheed

Just before the president's announcement, many police officers had joined the protests. Some took over the television broadcasting building in Malé, the capital city. Many described what the police had done as a [mutiny](#). The protesters also surrounded the army's main base in Malé.

The Maldives is a group, or archipelago, of more than 1,000 islands in the Indian Ocean, off the southern tip of India. About 200 of the islands are inhabited. The population is about 370,000.

Mr. Nasheed became president in 2008. Before that, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom ran the Maldives. He had been in charge for 30 years. Many accused him of running the country as a dictator. Mr. Gayoom won six elections, but each time there was no-one standing against him.

Mr. Nasheed was one person who criticized Mr. Gayoom. He was put in prison for this. In 2003, he left the Maldives because he did not think that it was safe for him to live there. He set up a new political party before returning to the Maldives in 2005. Later he was arrested for protesting and put in prison again.

Eventually, Mr. Gayoom agreed to hold a democratic presidential election in 2008. By this time Mr. Nasheed had been freed. He declared that he would stand against Mr. Gayoom in the election.

Most people thought that Mr. Gayoom would easily win. Yet Mr. Nasheed got 56% of the votes. He therefore became the first democratically elected president of the Maldives. He was 41 years old at the time.

Mr. Nasheed has become well known for doing things to highlight possible dangers from climate change. For example, in 2009 he held a 30 minute government meeting underwater. The islands of the Maldives are only just above the level of the sea. Many people think that sea levels will rise if average world temperatures continue to increase. If this were to happen, the Maldives could be [submerged](#).

The Maldives is popular with tourists. There are large hotels on the islands and many people work in tourism. However, recent financial problems in many richer countries caused the number of visitors to decrease. This means that there are fewer jobs available to young people.



Malé

The protesters were angry because Mr. Nasheed had ordered army commanders to arrest a senior judge. He said that the judge unfairly supported groups that opposed him. This was because the judge

ordered the release of a man who had been arrested for criticizing the government. The judge insisted that the man's arrest was illegal.

Mr. Nasheed said that he did not want the violence to continue and therefore thought that it was best to resign. Waheed Hassan, the vice-president, has now taken over the running of the country. ■

CCD PESTICIDE

Around six years ago beekeepers noticed a problem with honeybees. Their numbers began to decrease. Eventually the problem was found to be a tiny fungus-like parasite that can kill bees. Yet a new scientific report from the U.S. says that the use of a certain pesticide is making the problem much worse.

Starting in about 2006, beekeepers in many countries were puzzled by the behavior of their bees. Adult bees were disappearing and not returning. In their hives the young bees could not survive on their own. This meant that the colony of bees died out. The problem has become known as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). In 2009, scientists estimated that CCD had caused the total honeybee population to decrease by about 33%.

What bees do is important for many farm crops and fruit trees. These need to be pollinated to grow successfully and produce seeds or fruits. For instance, apples, carrots, squash, and crops used to make feed for farm animals need honeybees to pollinate them. If they are not pollinated the crops can fail. This means that if there were no bees it could have a serious effect on food supplies.

For several years scientists have been investigating CCD. They discovered that many bees were dying

because of a tiny parasite. Parasites are creatures that live off others. Not all parasites cause problems and some can be beneficial, or useful. Yet this fungus-like parasite, called nosema, is very harmful to bees, especially if it gets into their hives. If a bee swallows nosema spores it becomes infected and may die.



Honeybees

The new study shows a certain pesticide seems to make bees more likely to become infected with the fungus-like parasite. Pesticides are chemicals used to protect certain crops from harmful insects, animals, or microbes.

The scientists set up experiments with bees in a laboratory. They deliberately **exposed** some of them to a small amount of the pesticide and then to nosema. The bees exposed to the pesticide were three times as likely to get infected with the parasite as bees that had not been exposed. The experiments therefore suggest this pesticide is making CCD much more likely to happen.

The pesticide is not one that is sprayed onto farm crops once they have started growing. Instead, seeds are treated with it before they are planted. This means that tiny amounts of the pesticide are actually in the plants as they grow.

Bee experts and **conservation-ists** say that this pesticide must be banned and no longer used on farm crops. However, the makers of the pesticide disagree. They think that

the scientists should be finding a way of controlling or getting rid of the nosema parasite in beehives, and not blaming the pesticide for the problem. ■

150,000 SIGNATURES

At the end of January, a book for young adults called *The Fault In Our Stars* reached the top of several “best selling” book lists. These record the books that have sold the most copies in the previous week. However, the book had already become a best seller, even before people were able to buy it in bookshops or from booksellers’ websites.

The book was written by an American author called John Green. Mr. Green’s books for young adults include *An Abundance of Katherines* and *Paper Towns*. These were published in 2006 and 2009.

The author’s latest novel tells the story of two teenagers. They meet at a support group for children and teenagers who have cancer. The book’s title comes from a line in a play written by William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616). It says “The fault ... is not in our stars, but in ourselves”. In Shakespeare’s play the person saying these words means that bad things happen not because it is fate or **des-tiny**, but because of what we decide or choose to do. Mr. Green says that he doesn’t think that this is always true. Some things, such as children

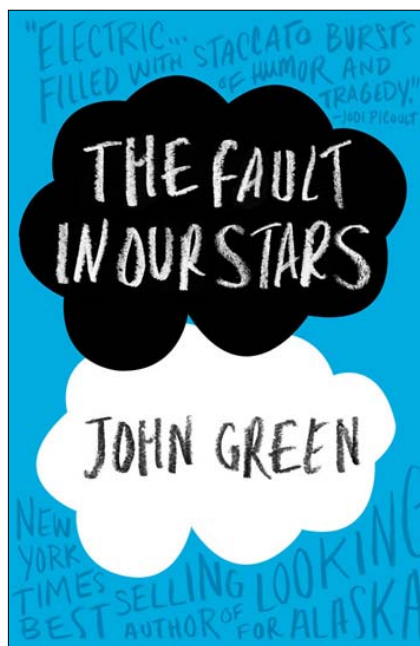
having to live with cancer, just aren’t their own fault.

Mr. Green and his brother are well-known for their video-blog (vlog) channel on Youtube. As well as this vlog, Mr. Green has over one million followers on other social media websites. His followers or fans call themselves “nerdfighters”.

Last June, the company that publishes Mr. Green’s books announced that the novel would be released in May 2012. Many of his online fans then began to imagine what it might be about and made up designs for the book’s cover. Once they found out the title was *The Fault in Our Stars*, Mr. Green’s fans nicknamed it TFiOS (pronounced tee-fee-yos).

Before books are released and go on sale in shops or on book-selling websites people can order them in advance. This is called pre-ordering. Mr. Green promised everyone who pre-ordered TFiOS, including people in countries other than the U.S., would get a copy signed by him. This has never been done before.

The number of copies of a book that are printed is called the “print run”. The first print run for TFiOS was 150,000 copies. When Mr. Green’s publishers saw how excited the nerdfighters were about his new book, they decided to publish it in January instead of in May. This meant that Mr. Green had to write his signature, or autograph, 150,000 times in less than six months, or an average of 2,000 times a day. ■



WINTER FESTIVALS

At this time of year it is winter in the northern hemisphere. Snow and ice can cause problems – but they can also provide entertainment. Some people also use the winter as a time to celebrate traditional ways of life.

Jääfestival

This ice festival starts on February 17 in the city of Pärnu, in Estonia. School students can take part in an ice hockey tournament and there are many winter sports to watch. Folk dancers perform dressed in colorful costumes, and there are concerts by choirs, pop groups, and the Youth Symphony Orchestra. Some people sign up for a longer program that starts at the festival: architecture and engineering with ice. They learn to design and construct a building out of ice using traditional local methods.



Up Helly Aa

This annual fire festival takes place in Lerwick, the capital of the Shetland islands, which are part of Britain. It is held on the last Tuesday of January. The festival is based on old Viking traditions. The leader of the day is called the Guizer Jarl. He leads a group of people dressed as Vikings. The Guizer Jarl's group travels around the town visiting the schools, the hospital, the Town Hall, the Museum and the ferry terminal. At the end of the day there is a procession. Almost 1,000 people carry flaming torches through Lerwick, watched by around 5,000 spectators. All the streetlights are switched off. The procession ends with a ceremony in which a wooden Viking ship, made by local craftspeople, is set on fire and burned.



Sapporo Snow Festival

One of Japan's biggest winter festivals took place in Sapporo, on the island of Hokkaido, at the beginning of February. Visitors to the festival can skate on an outdoor ice rink, watch snowboarding displays, and sample local foods. Most come to see the snow sculptures. As many as two million people visit Sapporo each year to watch the huge sculptures being made. Artists use chainsaws and hand tools to carve them from huge blocks of packed snow.



The sculptures often include copies of famous buildings such as the Taj Mahal, in India. This year a primary school student designed one sculpture. Her design was of a "dream castle" made from images of her favorite animals.

Festival du Voyageur

The voyageurs were French people who lived and worked in Canada during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They traded animal furs. The voyageurs brought furs from the "wild" west back to cities in the east where they could be sold. The word voyageur means traveler in French. The ten-day festival takes place in Winnipeg, where there are both French and Métis populations. The Métis are people descended from the voyageurs and native North Americans (known as First Nations people). The festival calls itself "the largest kitchen party in the world". The kitchen party is a Canadian tradition of playing folk music, usually with violins, and singing in a big group sitting around a table with good food. The traditional voyageur festival costume includes a red toque, a long red bobble hat, which is the symbol of the voyageurs.



Jokkmokk Market

The Jokkmokk Market takes place in northern Sweden every year on the first Thursday in February. The Saami, the indigenous people of northern Sweden, have been holding this festival for over 400 years. Jokkmokk is the Saami word for a bend in the river. Normally the number of people living in the village is about 3,500. Yet this almost doubles during the Market festival. Visitors attend concerts, taste Saami foods, and learn about Saami culture. This year a three-day meeting was held in Jokkmokk before the festival. It was organized by the NCCN (Northern Climate Change Network). Representatives from other countries that have Arctic regions, such as Canada, the U.S., and Russia, attended. They discussed the effects of climate change on the Arctic and fossil fuel exploration in the region.



AU MEETING

The African Union (AU) held its annual two-day meeting, or summit, on January 29 and 30. The meeting was the first to be attended by South Sudan. It is the world's newest country and became an independent nation only last year.

The meeting was held in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. This is where the AU has its headquarters.

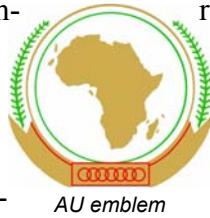
The AU is an organization of 54 member countries in Africa. It's sometimes described as being similar to the European Union (EU). The AU was set up in 2001. The only African country that has decided not to be a member is Morocco.

The day before the meeting, the AU's new headquarters was officially opened. The building is 20 floors high and has a large conference hall. This has enough room for just over 2,500 people. The building also has offices and smaller meeting rooms. The building cost \$200 million. It was built by a Chinese company and paid for by the government of China.



New AU headquarters, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Over the last 15 years, the Chinese government has spent large amounts of money in Africa. It has many of the natural resources that China needs. These include oil, gold, platinum, copper, diamonds and other precious gems and minerals,



AU emblem

which are all used by Chinese factories. China has helped many countries in Africa to develop these natural resources. In return for being able to operate their mines and oil fields, China has agreed to build roads, schools, and hospitals in many African countries.

Jia Qinglin, a senior Chinese government official, made a speech at the opening of the new AU building. He said that it is a symbol of the friendship between China and Africa.

Ban Ki-moon, the secretary-general of the United Nations (U.N.), was invited to the meeting. In his speech Mr. Ban talked about elections to be held in many AU countries in 2012. He said that the governments must make sure that all of these elections are both free and fair.

During the two-day meeting AU members discussed how to improve trade and work more closely together. There were also several leadership contests at the summit. Benin's president, Thomas Yayi, was selected as the new AU chairperson, or leader. He will now hold this job for one year. Mr. Yayi takes over from Teodoro Obiang Nguema, the president of Equatorial Guinea, who has been chairperson for the last 12 months.

The chairperson of the AU is a figurehead for the organization, and doesn't have much power. It is the leader of the AU Commission who makes most of the important decisions. Jean Ping, from Gabon, has held this position since 2008.

At the summit Mr. Ping was hoping to be elected for another four-year term. Yet many member countries have been critical of some things he has done during the last four years. They decided to vote for

NewsCAST

MOUSE OR MONEY — A man in Sweden was surprised when he went to a cash machine to take some money out. He saw what looked like a shoelace coming out of one of the machine's slots. When he pulled it, it broke off in his hand. It was then the man realized it was a mouse's tail. The little animal had somehow become stuck inside the cash machine. Together with some passers-by the man managed to get the mouse out of the machine but it quickly ran away. The man said that he did not know if the mouse would survive what had happened to it.

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, from South Africa, instead. After several votes there was no clear winner. In the end it was decided Mr. Ping will keep the job for six more months. Then another vote will be held. ■

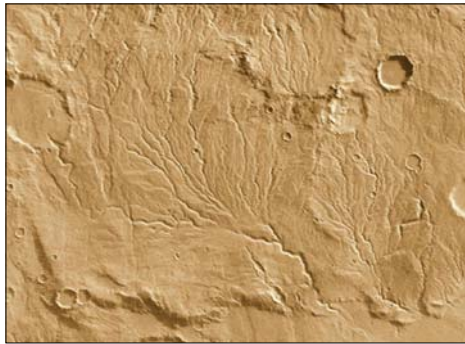
MARS SUPER-DROUGHT

Has there ever been liquid water on the surface of Mars? After studying Martian soil samples, scientists from a university in Britain believe that there has not been any running water on the planet for the last 600 million years.

Scientists think that in the past there must have been liquid water on Mars. The planet seems to have valleys in shapes that could have been formed by rivers. Cliffs can also be seen that look as if they have been eroded, or worn away, by running water. If there was once liquid water on the planet, there may also have been some forms of life.

Mars is very cold compared with the Earth, because it is further away

from the Sun. There is some water on the planet but it is frozen under the ground.



Picture of the surface of Mars showing river-like formations

In 2008, a NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) unmanned spacecraft, called Phoenix, landed on Mars. The spacecraft contained a lot of scientific equipment. It had robot-like arms that could pick up soil samples. These samples were then analyzed by its scientific equipment. So although no soil samples have ever been brought back to the Earth from Mars, the scientists were able to remotely study those samples collected by Phoenix.

The scientists compared the clay-like soil samples, or particles, with ones from the Moon, where there is no liquid water, and from the Earth, where there is plenty.

On the Moon the rocks are eroded into soil by the impact of meteorites. This happens on Mars as well, but there small particles of soil can also be formed by the wind. This is known as “weathering”.

Nearly all of the soil samples from Mars were similar to those found on the Moon, which are not formed by water erosion.

Phoenix took samples from only the northern part of the planet. However, the soil on Mars is believed to be all the same. Therefore, the scientists say that the samples collected by

Phoenix are similar to those everywhere else on the planet.

The scientists now think that there has been a drought on Mars that has lasted at least 600 million years. They say that in the distant past the planet was very different from today. It was warmer and did have running water. Yet they estimate this period may have lasted for only about 5,000 years. This would probably have been too short a time for life to have formed.

It now seems certain that the only possible place liquid water may exist on Mars is deep below its surface. There the temperature is warmer. Therefore, if any tiny organisms did evolve and still survive on the planet, the only likely place they will be is deep underground. ■

SPAIN'S JOBLESS FIGURES

On January 27, officials announced that the number of adults in Spain who do not have a job has increased. The number is now 5.3 million people, or about 22.8% of the population.

The number of people not working is called the unemployment figure. It is very important to most governments. This is because it often shows how successful a country's economy is. Unemployment figures normally go down when a country's economy is doing well, and up when it is doing badly.

Rising unemployment creates many problems for governments. One of the main ones is that it costs a lot of money. If people can't find a job, they are no longer paying income tax. This is a tax everyone who earns a salary, or wages, must pay to the government.

Also, many governments help those who are not working by giving

them some money (sometimes called benefits or employment insurance) until they can find a job. Governments therefore have to pay out more unemployment benefits when the number of people who don't have a job goes up.

It is very unusual to have an unemployment rate of 0%. Most experts say that a country's economy is doing well if the unemployment figure is around 3% or lower.

Spain is a member of the European Union (EU). Other EU member countries that currently have very high unemployment figures are Portugal, Italy, and Greece. These are all around double the average of the other 23 EU member countries.

Many people say that Spain's unemployment figures contain a bigger problem. In Spain, as well as in several other EU countries, the number of young people who don't have jobs is even worse. About 51% of all Spanish 16 to 24 year olds do not have a job. In other countries such as Italy, Britain, and France this figure is not as high as Spain's. However, it is still around 20%.



Demonstration by young people in Spain

There are several reasons youth unemployment is so high in these countries. Some companies want to reduce their number of workers. Yet several countries, including Spain, have laws that make it difficult for them to do this. Companies have therefore decided to take on fewer new workers instead.

NewsCAST

BOOT BAN — A school in the U.S. has banned students from wearing boots that reach to the calf or the knee. However, the ban has nothing to do with school uniform. The reason is cell phones. Students may bring cell phones to school, but must switch them off and keep them in their lockers during class time. Yet a few have been smuggling their phones into classes hidden in their calf-length boots. Some students are unhappy about the ban. They say that those caught with phones in classes should be punished instead of everyone being banned from wearing their boots.

Older workers are also now retiring later in life than they used to. Therefore, fewer jobs are becoming available. Also, over the last few years, many manufacturing companies have decided to get their products made in other parts of the world such as China. They do this because it is less expensive to make them in these places than it is in their own country.

Some people describe high levels of youth unemployment as a “time-bomb”. By this they mean it is likely to cause serious problems in the future. All countries need young workers to pay taxes. This is because some of this money is needed to help to look after older people when they retire.

Young people who cannot find jobs often have to live with their parents until they are much older. Some young people in Spain say that they are planning to move to other countries to find work. Many have taken part in street demonstrations to complain about the lack of jobs. Being unemployed for a long

time can affect people’s happiness and health.

Not all countries have rising unemployment figures. For instance, on February 3, the government of the U.S. said that its unemployment figure had just fallen to 8.3%. Several months ago it was nearly 10%. Some experts predict that the number will now continue to fall as the U.S.’s economy improves. ■

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

The World Economic Forum (WEF) took place between January 25 and 29. The WEF is a series of conferences and presentations held every year around the end of January in the small town of Davos, in Switzerland. Most people call the annual meeting “Davos” instead of the WEF.



Conference at the World Economic Forum

About 2,500 people attend each year. They usually include the bosses of the world’s biggest companies, and leaders of international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Religious leaders and trades unionists, as well as leading musicians, actors, artists, and journalists also attend. Only those invited to Davos may take part.

Although it is not a political meeting, some specially-selected politicians are also invited. Often one of these people makes the

opening address, or speech. This year Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany, gave the opening address. Last year it was Russia’s president, Dmitry Medvedev.

The first WEF was held in 1971. Klaus Schwab, an economist from Germany, set up the organization. He believed that it would be useful for important and powerful people to be able to discuss ideas at an informal meeting. The WEF’s slogan is “committed to improving the state of the world”.

At each annual meeting, those attending discuss the biggest problems in the world. Often, the talks are about economic difficulties and how they might be solved. Each year there is a theme for the discussions. This time it was “The Great Transformation: Shaping New Models”.

One of the main subjects discussed was the eurozone, or the 17 countries that use the euro as their currency. Another was the high numbers of young people who do not have jobs in many countries.

Talks also took place about income inequality. This phrase describes the big difference between the wages of bosses of big companies and workers. The amount of money bosses are paid seems to be getting higher and higher, while the wages of many of the workers are either going down or staying the same. Many who attended the talks said that something must be done about youth unemployment and income inequality. They warn these problems could lead to future large demonstrations and protests in many countries.

Possible problems in the Middle East were also discussed. Although Iran denies it is developing nuclear



weapons, many countries accuse it of doing so. Israel, the U.S. and several European countries believe that if Iran does make nuclear weapons other countries in the region such as Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia may decide to develop them as well.

As well as its meeting in Davos the WEF holds annual conferences in China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). ■

LITTLE ICE AGE

When we think of the Ice Age, we often imagine woolly mammoths, prehistoric humans, and thick ice sheets covering the Earth's surface. Yet did you know there was a "miniature" or "little" ice age that ended as recently as 1850? Now a team of scientists says that it has discovered what caused this "mini" ice age,

and the reason it lasted for as long as it did.

The last major ice age ended about 10,000 years ago. Some scientists call the period between 1650 and 1850 the "Little Ice Age". During this time the Earth's temperature was not as cold as in previous ice ages. However, historical documents and records suggest the winters in the northern hemisphere were, on average, a lot colder than they are today.

For example, nowadays, in much of modern Europe, there is not much snow in the winter. Rivers and lakes rarely freeze. This winter's very cold weather in many parts of Europe is quite unusual.

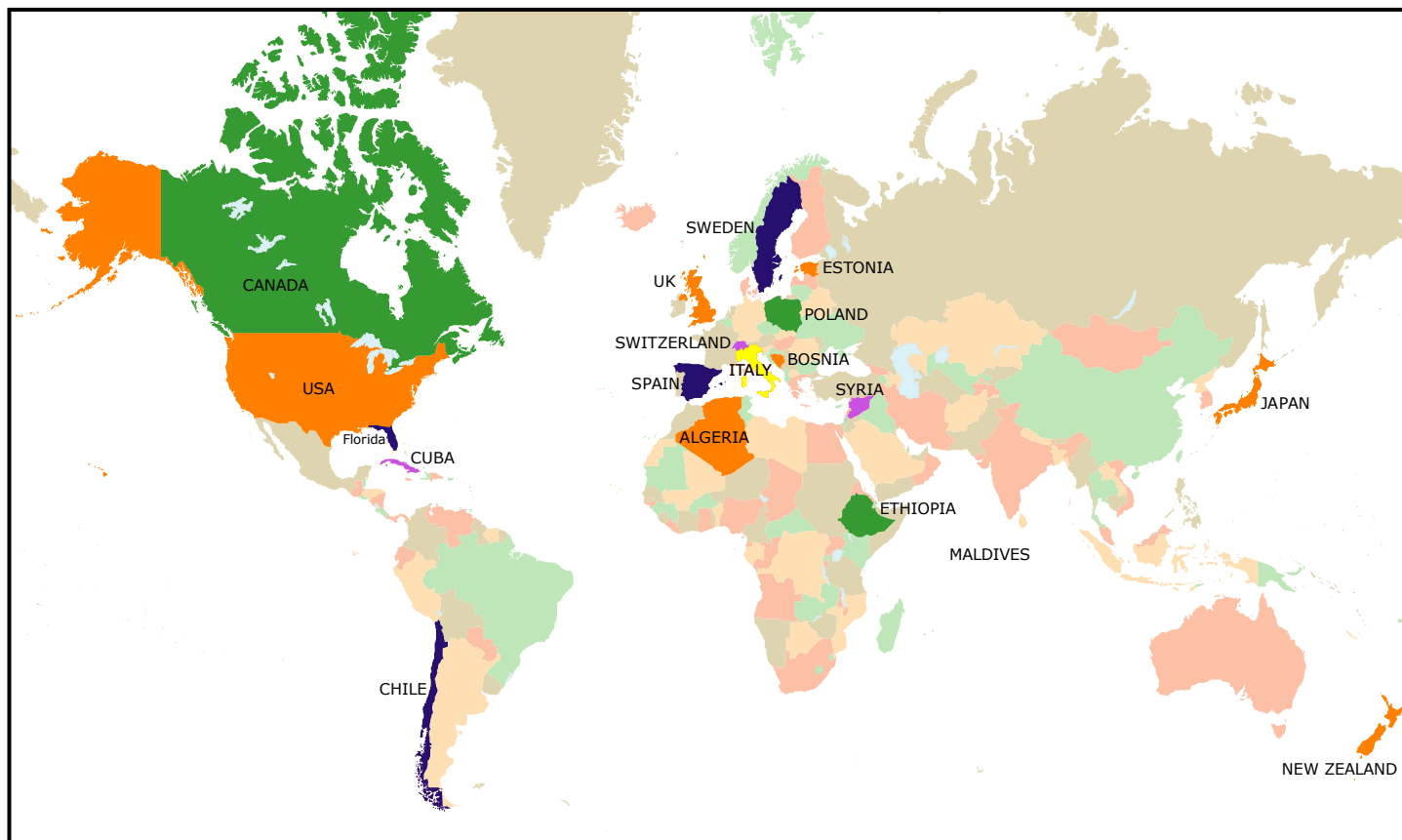
Yet historical records from countries such as Britain, Poland, and The Netherlands show that the winters of the mid-1600s were much colder than they are today. Even

books and works of art from this time suggest this is true. Novels and paintings describe or show people ice-skating on frozen rivers and enjoying outdoor games in the snow. Some towns in Europe's far north are reported to have been destroyed, and the people had to move, as glaciers expanded.



Picture painted in 1652 of a winter scene with people skating on a frozen lake, by Pieter Bruegel

Strange weather patterns, say researchers, had begun happening in Europe even before these colder temperatures. For example, there



were many years of very heavy rains in the early 1300s.

The new study suggests four huge volcanic eruptions in tropical parts of the world were the reason for the start of this unusual weather. The scientists are not sure where these volcanic eruptions were but they are believed to have happened in the tropics between 1275 and 1300.

So how could volcanic eruptions so far away make European winters colder? Some of the gasses and particles thrown into the air by volcanoes reflect energy from the Sun instead of allowing it to reach the Earth. It's known that one large volcanic eruption can have a slight cooling effect on the Earth for several months. The scientists say that several large eruptions over a few decades could have led the temperature to cool over a long enough period for glaciers and ice sheets to grow bigger.

Once ice sheets begin to get bigger they reflect more and more of the Sun's heat instead of [absorbing](#) it. This means that the temperatures get even colder. Therefore, these cold temperatures, at first caused by the volcanic eruptions, continued for many years. ■

HOLOCAUST REMEMBERED

On January 27, many people around the world marked International Holocaust Remembrance (or Memorial) Day. The Holocaust is the name given to the mass murder of millions of people, including around six million Jews and two million Gypsies, by the Nazis during the Second World War (1939 – 1945).

Before the Second World War began, Nazi officials in Germany set up camps that became known

as concentration camps. People who disagreed with the Nazi [ideology](#) were sent to them. There, some were killed and many were forced to work as slave labor.



Recent photograph of one of the entrances to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp

After the war began, more concentration camps were set up in other countries. Perhaps the most well-known today is Auschwitz-Birkenau (often called Auschwitz), in Poland. The Nazis sent millions of Jewish people from many European countries to these camps in overcrowded trains. They were often told that they were being moved to new homes.

Yet when they arrived at the camps some were forced to work while many others were murdered. Thousands died of starvation or disease. In some camps, such as Auschwitz, hundreds of thousands were killed in gas chambers and their bodies were burned.

After the war ended, many of the people who ran the camps were put on trial for what they had done. Those found guilty were executed.

Since the end of the war, different countries have remembered the Holocaust on different days. In 2005, the United Nations (U.N.) decided to [designate](#) January 27, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This date is significant, as January 27, 2005 was the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. This was the day on which Russian soldiers arrived and freed the people in the camp.

On January 27, special events were held in many cities. One memorial took place at the U.N.'s headquarters, in New York City, in the U.S. In Britain, an organization called the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust asked people to sign a pledge, or promise. The pledge-signing took place in a square in London, Britain's capital, on January 26. It is also available to sign online.

People who sign the pledge promise to remember those who have lost their lives because of hatred. This means not only during the Holocaust but in more recent mass killings, or genocides, in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur (a region of Sudan) as well.

Those signing the pledge also promise to [challenge](#) other people when they hear them using language of hatred, and to always speak and write in a way that does not harm others.



Jewish people arriving at the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944

Another event took place in Turkey. There an important French documentary movie called *Shoah* was shown for the first time. It is over nine hours long. The movie took many years to make and was first shown in 1985. Shoah is a Hebrew word also used for the Holocaust. It means "disaster" or "calamity". The movie contains interviews with survivors, witnesses, and even people who worked in the Nazi concentration camps.

Recently, the governments of Turkey and Israel have had several disagreements. Israel is a Jewish state and Turkey's population is mostly Muslim. The arguments have mainly been about the treatment of Palestinians who live in an area called the Gaza Strip, close to Israel.

Jewish people in Turkey said that showing the movie as part of Holocaust Remembrance Day was important. They explained that it shows the recent disagreement is only between the two countries' governments and not between Turkish and Jewish people. ▣

BRAIN EXPERIMENTS

Scientists in the U.S. have announced the results of an unusual experiment on human brains. The experiment was designed to try to work out how our brains decode, and form, language.

NewsCast

WHERE ARE WE? — Students from France became confused during a visit to a town called Ipswich, in Britain. Their map of the town didn't seem to match the streets or landmarks they saw. Eventually somebody showed them where the local tourist information office was. When the people working in the office saw the maps they understood the problem. The maps, which had been downloaded from the internet, were for a town called Ipswich, but not the one in Britain. They were for Ipswich in Australia. The tourist office workers gave the students some correct maps and promised to send some to their school so the problem doesn't happen again.

There's still a lot that scientists and doctors don't know about how the human brain works. Yet they do understand some things. They know the brain processes information through electrical signals. They also know different parts of the brain control different things, such as movement, memory, and speaking.

Fifteen patients volunteered to let doctors remove parts of their skulls. The volunteers were in the hospital being treated for epilepsy. This is a brain disorder that can cause people to have seizures, or fits. It is caused by something going wrong with the electrical activity of the brain. Some types of epilepsy can be controlled with medicine. However, the 15 patients have a form of epilepsy that cannot be treated.

To try to find out more about these people's epilepsy the doctors removed the top part of their skulls. Electrodes were then put on the surface of their brains. Doctors then waited for them to have seizures. The electrodes recorded which areas of the brain seemed to be causing them. This meant that doctors could carry out surgery to remove the part of the brain and stop the fits from happening again.

Epileptic fits do not happen all the time and there can be several days or weeks between them. The patients therefore had the electrodes on their brains for a long time. While waiting for a seizure to happen, they agreed to do some language tests with a group of scientists.

The patients listened to several words over and over again. The scientists, using the electrodes, discovered which parts of their brains became active and responded to the words.

The scientists then made a computer program that could translate the brain activity recorded by the electrodes into sound. Often the sounds were difficult to understand. However, some were possible to work out. They were the sounds of the same words the patients had listened to.



Human brain

Some people have said that this experiment is the beginning of being able to read people's minds or their thoughts. Yet the scientists say that is very unlikely. To do this, the electrodes and computer programs would have to decode a word someone was thinking of, or imagining, rather than one he or she was hearing. However, the experiment shows that in the future it may be possible to understand people who cannot speak. For instance, if a person were in a [coma](#), it could allow his or her brain activity to be translated into words. ▣

ACCESSION ANNIVERSARY

On February 6, 1952, King George the Sixth, the monarch of Britain, died at the age of 56. His 25 year old daughter, Princess Elizabeth, was visiting Kenya at the time. It was there that she learned she was about to become Queen Elizabeth the Second. This means that February 6 was the 60th anniversary of her [accession](#) to the throne.

On hearing the news of her father's death, Princess Elizabeth and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, flew back to London, the capital of Britain. The new queen was met at the airport by the prime minister at the time, Winston Churchill.



Queen Elizabeth the Second

Britain is a constitutional monarchy. The Queen is the official head of state but she does not have any political power. The monarch is not allowed to vote in public elections. In a constitutional monarchy, the country is run by an elected prime minister and not by its head of state. So far during Queen Elizabeth's reign Britain has had 12 prime ministers.

In 2006, Queen Elizabeth the Second became the oldest-ever monarch of the country. She is now 85 years old. Previously, the oldest reigning king or queen was Queen Victoria, Queen Elizabeth's great-great-grandmother. Queen Victoria lived for 81 years and 243 days. Queen Victoria is still the longest-reigning monarch in British history. She reigned for almost 64 years. Queen Elizabeth will have reigned

for the same length of time on September 9, 2015.

Queen Elizabeth is the head of state of 15 other countries as well as Britain. These are called the Commonwealth realms. They include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Jamaica. She is also the head of the Commonwealth (officially called the Commonwealth of Nations). This is a group of 54 independent countries. All except two, Mozambique and Rwanda, were once part of the British Empire.

As this is the 60th year of her reign, 2012 is Queen Elizabeth's Diamond **Jubilee**. A diamond anniversary celebrates 60 years. The last Diamond Jubilee in Britain was in 1897, which marked the 60th year of the reign of Queen Victoria.

Many large events have been planned in Britain as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Most of these, including a four-day holiday, will be held in the summer. On February 6, Queen Elizabeth visited an infant school and watched a musical play performed by the children.

Although she became queen in 1952, Queen Elizabeth was not crowned until June 2, 1953. There was a period of mourning, or grieving, for her father, King George the Sixth. It also meant there was enough time to plan a big coronation ceremony. ■

FREEZING EUROPE

Many countries in Europe have been suffering their worst winter weather for nearly 30 years.

A huge mass of very cold air is now over large parts of northern Europe. This is bringing cold winds and snow, from northern Russia

and the Arctic regions, much further south than usual. Temperatures in many places have fallen below -4°F (-20°C).

Some of the worst-affected countries are in Eastern Europe. In Ukraine officials say that more than 130 people have died because of the cold. Many more are suffering from frostbite and **hypothermia**. Sudden periods of cold weather like this are often called a "cold snap".



People enjoying the snow in Rome, capital of Italy

There have been similar problems in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. Parts of the River Danube, which flows through several eastern European countries, have frozen. Coastal areas of the Black Sea even began to ice over.

Around three feet (one meter) of snow has fallen on Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. Thousands of people living in smaller villages in the country, where the snow is much deeper, have been cut off. The government has used helicopters to send supplies of food and medicines.

All over Europe flights have been canceled or delayed. Some airports closed down. In Italy, hundreds of people became trapped on trains that had stopped because of the snow.

Italy recorded its coldest temperatures for 27 years. In Venice, several of the city's famous canals froze over. In Rome, the capital city, popular tourist attractions such as the Coliseum had to be

closed on February 5, because of the snow.

On Sundays many people visit the Vatican, the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. There, Pope Benedict the Sixteenth often appears to greet visitors in Saint Peter's Square. Like most of Rome, the square was covered in snow. The Pope told visitors "the snow is beautiful, but let's hope that spring comes soon".

Heavy snowfalls were also recorded in France and Spain. There has even been a cold snap in Algeria, on the north coast of Africa. Roads were blocked by snow and some villages in the mountains were cut off. Normally at this time of year the average temperature in Algeria is above 50°F (10°C).

Weather forecasters say that Europe's cold weather will probably last until the middle of February. ■

PYTHONS IN THE EVERGLADES

Officials in the U.S. report that native mammals living in an area called the Everglades, in the state of Florida, are in danger of disappearing. The reason, they say, is the increasing number of pythons that have made this part of Florida their home.

The Everglades are a large area of wetland. Much of this area is a protected national park. Over the last few years the number of native mammals, such as raccoons, opossums, bobcats, foxes, and cottontail rabbits, in parts of the Everglades has been decreasing quickly. Many are eaten by pythons.

Pythons are snakes that can grow up to 12 foot (3.7 meters) long. They do not have a poisonous bite like some other snakes.

Instead they kill by using their bodies to squeeze their prey to death. Snakes that do this are known as constrictors. Young pythons often climb trees and eat birds and their eggs as well. As they get older and bigger the snakes spend more time on the ground. They are also very good swimmers.



Everglade park workers after catching one of the Burmese pythons

Pythons are not native to the Everglades. So they are what is known as an invasive species. Conservationists think that they were first introduced there because people who kept young Burmese and African pythons as pets released them into the wild. This was probably because the snakes had become too big to look after. It is also possible that some escaped from local zoos. The pythons have been living in the Everglades for many years and, as they have been breeding, their numbers have quickly increased.

The new study estimated the number of native mammals in three different areas of the Everglades. One area is known to have a large breeding population of pythons. Another is where pythons have been spotted only recently. The third is where they are yet to be seen.

The study compared the mammal population numbers in these three areas for the years 1993 – 1999 with those from 2003 – 2011. Pythons were not generally seen in the Everglades before 1999. However, by

2003 they were known to be living in certain parts of the national park.

The officials say that they are shocked by the results of their study. In areas without pythons, the mammal populations were of a similar size to those in 1993 – 1999. The decrease was larger in areas where pythons were recently found. Yet the biggest decrease was in places where pythons have been living for several years. There, the raccoon population went down by 99.3%. Other species, such as rabbits and foxes, were not seen at all. It's likely, say the officials, that the pythons are having the same effect on bird populations too.

In January, the American government banned anyone from importing, or bringing in, Burmese and African pythons or their eggs to the U.S. They will no longer be sold as pets. While park officials are pleased about this new rule, they say that it is probably too late to save the native species in the Everglades.

The giant snakes are difficult to track down. So far over 1,000 pythons have been caught in the Everglade. Yet officials estimate there are now at least 15,000 of them living in the park. ■

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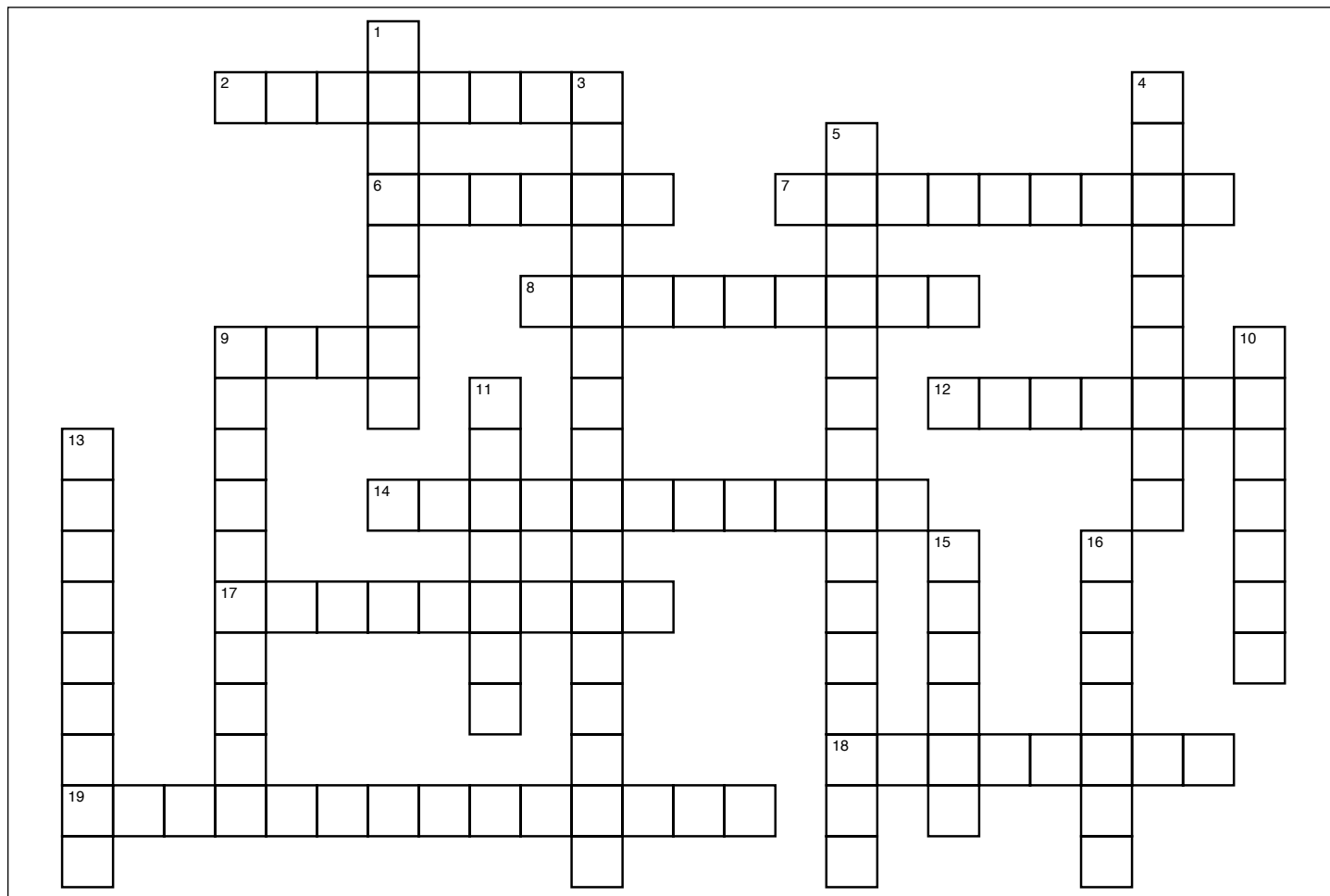
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ISSUE 164

GLOSSARY PUZZLE

INSTRUCTIONS: ① Complete the crossword. The answers are highlighted in orange in the news stories. There are 25 words highlighted and you need 20 of them to complete the crossword. ② Once you have solved the crossword go to the word search on the next page ➡



Across

- 2 Adjective** Describes something used in or to do with a person's home
- 6 Noun** The refusal to obey orders from someone in command, especially of soldiers and sailors
- 7 Adjective** Describes something that is divided into parts
- 8 Noun** An area of land that an animal defines as its own and tries to control
- 9 Noun** A long period of unconsciousness, usually caused by disease or injury
- 12 Noun** A special anniversary, or the celebration of an anniversary
- 14 Noun** A serious and sometimes fatal medical condition when the body gets too cold for its natural processes to warm it up
- 17 Noun** Moving into a position of rank or power
- 18 Noun** The ideas and beliefs that determine the actions of a group of people, political party, or country
- 19 Noun** A major or complete change in something from one state to another

Down

- 1 Noun** A place where vehicles, passenger ships, or aircraft begin or end a journey
- 3 Noun (Plural)** People who look after the natural environment and wildlife
- 4 Noun** A member of a small, unofficial army who fights by making surprise attacks
- 5 Noun (Plural)** People, groups or armies that want to change a country's government by using violence
- 9 Noun** An animal that has a hard outer shell, a segmented body, and jointed limbs
- 10 Noun** A fixed course of future events that some people believe is controlled by an outside force
- 11 Verb** To be brought into contact with something, often something harmful
- 13 Verb** To give something an official name, title, or purpose
- 15 Verb** Blocked a vote or important decision
- 16 Noun** To return something to the condition it was in when it was first made

Issue 164

GLOSSARY PUZZLE *CONTINUED*

C O N S E R V A T I O N I S T S S T
I R X K L V Z F B S Y E R O T S E R
T C U Q Y X S T Y N I T S E D L T A
S J T S Y C Z B I K V A D Y C A T N
E C K R T J J T M E I N Y E J F N S
M H I X A A U P T Z O G H P M O D F
O N Y S K M C O N I R I X S Z E H O
D K F A A N E E S T Z S G P S A L R
S G L W K D P S A X O E C O W L D M
Q I A Y Z S E Y F N J D P P W L E A
B E N A W C R G T P A X T S N I T T
R K I Z C S P X H C E L H F H R N I
M V M A I M R E H T O P Y H N R E O
G Q R M Y R O T I R R E T K F E M N
P E E O F G V L I X R W U J K U G S
P N T C N G H E H U E M Y U A G E Z
W I D E O L O G Y Y Y T G C J B S P
S E I R A N O I T U L O V E R I X Y

INSTRUCTIONS: ③ Find 19 of the 20 crossword answers in the word search. Words can go vertically, horizontally, diagonally and back to front. ④ After finding the 19 words write down the 20th (or missing) word under the puzzle.

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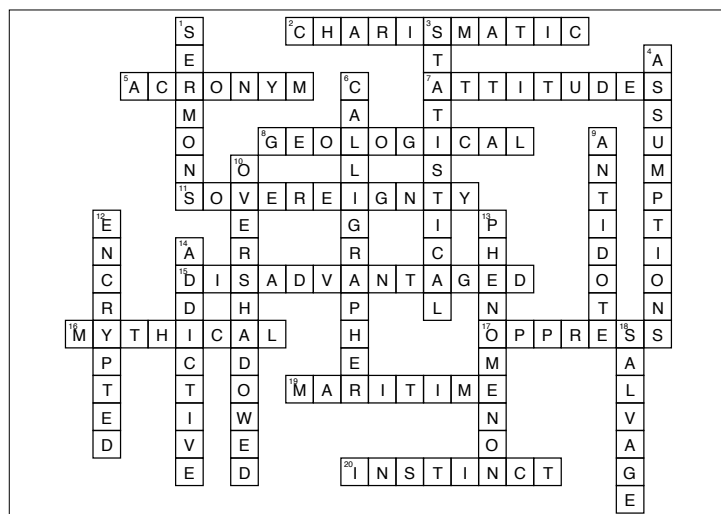


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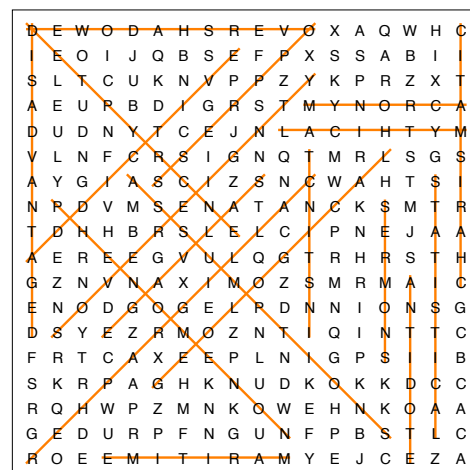
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If you wish to earn additional Demics log in to www.newsademic.com, go to the Prize Competitions area and submit the missing word. Puzzle entries must be submitted by 10 pm on February 22, 2012 (GMT/UTC).*

MISSING WORD ANSWER =



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A T T I T U D E S